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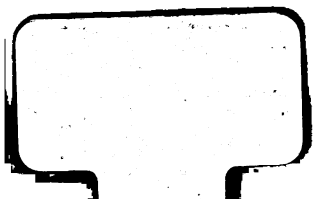
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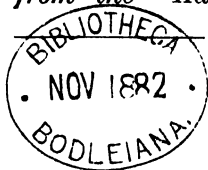
THE
ARCHÆOLOGY OF BOOKS.

A Paper read to the Hawick Archaeological
Society

On Tuesday, 16th May, 1882.

BY J. C. GOODFELLOW.

Reprinted from the "Hawick News."



HAWICK:
VAIR & McNAIRN, 24 HIGH STREET.
1882.

2581. f. 2 .

THE ARCHÆOLOGY OF BOOKS.

THE title of the following paper may be briefly given as "The Archæology of Books." Under this title I purpose to consider books from an archæological point of view; and although to many it may appear that to look at books from such a point of observation is to consider them in generally a depreciatory manner, I cannot help thinking that, apart from the feelings with which we may be individually influenced, the archæological point of view is—after all has been said that can be said—the one most entitled to rank as worthy of our attention.

It is almost impossible to fix the time when the art of writing, or of making marks or impressions on any material, plastic or otherwise, was first introduced or conceived. We have always to turn our eyes eastwards and southwards, when we want to approximate in relation to time, to the table-lands of Persia, the southern coast of Asia, and the north-eastern part of Africa. Ideas at first were conveyed—when oral means were not used—by pictorial representation; and in the vast and gigantic temples of India are yet to be seen pictorial representations of ideas which, after two hundred centuries of years, are in many cases as fresh as when first chiselled. At a later date we find in Egypt that singular form of pictorial speech known as hieroglyphics—a form of embodying ideas for their preservation to future generations which, however incongruous to us of the present day, yet

appeals to our senses in a manner perhaps as acutely as even the hieroglyphics would do to generations that lived only a few hundred years after their emblazonment. It is hardly possible not to be struck with surprise at the false notions which have been expressed and taught respecting the age of these marvellous monuments of an extinct and obliterated race. The modern Egyptian, be he ever so well taught, unless he has quaffed knowledge at English, French, or German schools, knows less about the history of the antiquities of his own land than even the averagely-educated European. The descendants of the long lines of kings and nobles, who for nearly thirty thousand years held sway throughout the vast and fertile valley of the Nile, have been within the last three thousand years completely absorbed by the ebbing and flowing of races. Successive races have time after time planted their footsteps there, till what was for many thousands of years the seat of a mighty empire has become in many places a waste and a desert; and if ever again the Nile valleys are to be the dwelling-place of a thriving and happy populace, England must be the chief agent in the grand and noble work of Egyptian regeneration.

In that tract of country anciently known as Assyria, at almost similar dates, we find speech not merely symbolised in pictorial representation on the walls of temples and other public edifices; but we also find symbolisation in the form of an impressed, chiselled, or printed character, and also in a written character—there being much reason for believing that the Babylonian and Assyrian empires flourished contemporaneously with the Egyptian monarchy, as both Babylon and Nineveh were, in the reign of the Egyptian king Thothmes III., tributary to that king. The cuneiform or arrow-headed letters which the Assyrians used when they wanted to preserve a poem, an essay, or an historical statement, occupied the same sort of place in their language that the Roman letters we use

in printing do in ours. The nobles and wealthy citizens of Assyria had libraries attached to their dwellings, and descriptive catalogues, numbered and alphabetically arranged, were laid on tables at the entrance, and the student was desired to hand to the librarian the number of the volume or book he wanted. In addition to the cuneiform alphabet, they had another set of characters or letters which were more easily used, and which held the place with them that our long-hand writing does with us. The library of the kings of Assyria consisted of hundreds of thousands of very thin tablets, made of terra-cotta, which, when in a plastic state, had printed on them various treatises on scientific subjects, such as botany, natural history, mathematics, astronomy, besides biographies, annals, and poetry. These terra-cotta tablets are as much entitled to be called books, at least in the sense of stored-up readable matter, as are even now the finest productions of the printer's art, and in these tablets we have the oldest language of which we have any knowledge enshrined in its entirety. It may be noted that the recently-published "Records of the Past" (S. Bagster & Sons, 1881), in twelve volumes, edited by S. Birch, LL.D., contains reference to an older language—the "Accadian"—which had become not merely obsolete, but extinct, among the ancient Assyrians of 5000 years ago. It seems to have been preserved only in the hymns to the sun god, which were recited or sung by the priests when special acts of worship were being celebrated. Some assert that a vast period must have elapsed from the time when the cuneiform character was in general use until the time when the Sanskrit came into general use, and that the Hebrew characters, which succeeded the Sanskrit, are of a very much later date, and must be looked upon as coming down to what may almost be called modern times, when put in juxtaposition with these very much more ancient and perplexingly written and printed alphabets. There are differences of opinion among scholars respecting

the relative ages of not only Sanskrit and Hebrew, but other old tongues or languages. There can be no doubt, however, that the Hebrew of the time of Ezra and Nehemiah was much different from that of the time of Moses. During the eleven centuries which nearly intervened, there must have taken place a considerable change in the language of the Jews. Their residence in Palestine was not one completely isolated, and the frequent intercourse which they had with the cities of Phœnicia on the north and Syria on the east, as well as with the wandering tribes of Edom, must have without doubt altered the idiom if not the letters. The collection of writings which the Jews regard as sacred, and which are by Christians called the Old Testament, exhibit so little diversity, according to critics (notably Gesenius), that it is impossible on rationalistic grounds to assign to them a variety of different ages. The oneness or unity which, in a philological sense, prevails throughout is a sufficient indication that, even if we allow different periods of time as dates of origin, they had been revised, altered, and amended in order to make them intelligible as a whole to the Jews who lived after the time of Cyrus. Next in order to the cuneiform characters must be classed the Phœnician, which, except in the old forms of the Greek, is now lost. According to the popular legend, it was to Phœnicia and Cadmus that Greece owed the characters which then went to form the Greek alphabet, and which even yet retain their place among the alphabets of the world; yet more than one hundred years before the era or time of Cadmus, many of the scenes depicted on the basso-reliefs now in the British Museum, known as the Arundelian marbles, had taken place. It has been supposed that many of the Arundelian basso-reliefs, which are said to have been chiselled about 260 years B.C., but especially the inscriptions, are copies in whole or in part of much more ancient inscriptions. The Elgin marbles also, which were chiselled by Phidias in the time of Pericles about

440 years B.C., are evidence of the literary taste and abilities of that period. Five-hundred-and-fifty years before the time of Pericles there had appeared the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*—the most ancient epic poems known to exist, and which, whether the productions of the blind old man of Chios, or the collected fragments of early Greek inspiration, are and will ever continue to be regarded as the most perfect specimens of poetical composition extant. According to various writers, the greater portion of the Pentateuch, or five books of Moses, was written about 1450 years before the Christian era, although there is internal evidence to show that passages now incorporated as part of the Pentateuch could not have been written until long after the time of the wise king Solomon, of which the following may be taken as a specimen from Genesis xxxvi. 31, "And these are the kings that reigned in the land of Edom before there reigned any king over the children of Israel." I may here observe that Dr Carter Blake, in a series of articles which he contributed to the *National Reformer*, has with considerable ability stated reasons for disbelieving the account given in the Pentateuch of the wanderings of the Israelites in the wilderness of Sinai. His reasons are related to ethnological and chronological difficulties, and present a singular case, more especially when we contrast his articles with the exegetical criticism of the Hebrew record by Dr Colenso. There can hardly be any doubt but that pictorial representation of ideas preceded the expression of ideas by means of writing. The Egyptians had, there is great reason to believe, a written or alphabetical mode of conveying language, or ideas and facts. The characters of the written language of ancient Egypt have been termed Enchorial, and a very fine specimen of this class of writing is to be seen on the celebrated Rosetta stone in the British Museum, on which there are three different kinds of chiselled appearances—namely, one in Hieroglyphics, one in Enchorial, and one in Greek. The Enchorial, which has by some

been described as a modified form of hieroglyphics, is now considered to have been the character commonly used in Egypt in almost any kind of written communication, long prior to the time when even authentic history may be said to begin. In Dr Erasmus Wilson's work, "The Egypt of the Past," the authentic history of Egypt is regarded as beginning with the era of Menes, more than 3600 years B.C. Champollion Figeac gives 5867 and Bunsen 3643 B.C. as the date, these being the highest and lowest approximations. The kings of the Egyptian dynasties, from the first to the eighteenth dynasty, appear to have been of Asiatic origin, the males being represented as a brownish yellow, and the females of a lighter shade. Aahmes I. (about 1700 B.C.), a king of the eighteenth dynasty, married a negress of Abyssinian birth, and as a consequence a succession of mulatto monarchs for several generations filled the Egyptian throne. The same class of ideas, and the same steps of progress, seem to have been common to ancient nations. Turn where we please we invariably find pictorial representation employed as the earliest means of conveying information. Gradually, and after the lapse of long periods of time, signs instead of pictures are used; these again, in process of time, are found to be discarded, and an alphabetical mode of expressing and conveying information is employed. By slow and intermittent efforts the latter result is accomplished, and in the gradual development of the various stages at different epochs, in countries widely separated by distance, we have manifest proof that man is a progressive being, who has been evolved from the dim vistas of an apparently interminable past, during which the instincts of his nature within him, and the forces of the universe outside of him, have so acted as to propel him onwards in thorough harmony with the laws of his nature.

It would require too much time, and a more extensive acquaintance with the subject than I

have, to trace and detail the gradual process by which books changed from ancient to modern forms. During the thousands of years which have elapsed since hieroglyphics in Egypt were first used until now, various ways have been tried to preserve written statements. Some of the ancients, with a view to preserve a record of important public matters, wrote such on thin plates of lead, copper, brass, silver, and in some instances on gold. The twelve tables of the Roman laws, whose origin is involved in obscurity, are variously stated by historians as having been of wood, of ivory, and of brass. The other laws of the Romans, which were subsidiary, viz., the acts of the Senate and the people, were engraved on plates of brass, which, in the time of Tacitus (107 A.D.), were more in number than three thousand. Some of them had more than one hundred chapters, and could vie in length with many of our Acts of Parliament. The leaves of the palm tree were also extensively used in Eastern India; while an Egyptian plant—the inner bark of which the Greeks called *Biblos*, from which comes our words Bible, book—was used by the Greeks for writing on; as were also thin slices of fine-grained wood. Later on the leaf of the papyrus plant was used by almost all Eastern nations until the year 263 B.C., when Ptolemy Philadelphus, King of Egypt, prohibited the exportation of papyrus. Parchments, or prepared skins, came into use about this time among the Greeks and Romans. Unprepared or simply dressed skins had, however, been in use among the inhabitants of Arabia, Persia, and Asia Minor for a long time previous. Fine linen was also used, though less frequently than other substances, and chiefly in Arabia and Syria. It was also used in Egypt, long inscriptions and passages from the ritual of the dead being often written on the linen wrappers which were rolled round embalmed bodies. At a still later time silk paper came into use, being manufactured much in the same way that our ordinary paper is, viz., first made into a pulp and then

worked up into a thin paper. Vellum, which is a very fine and soft class of prepared skins, is made from young calves' skins, and although very expensive has also been much used in the making of rare and prized books. All materials for book-making purposes have now, however, given place to paper. The first paper mills in England were erected at Dartford by Sir John Speilman, a German, and in the year 1580 the first coarse white paper was made; before that time all our supplies were got from France and Holland.

There is an immense difference between the terra-cotta tablets which formed the royal library of the kings of Assyria and any modern collection of books. Though more convenient in form for purposes of amusement, instruction, or study, the books of the present day are yet devoid of one of the characteristics which the Assyrian tablets possessed—namely, the power of resisting destruction or decay through the vicissitudes to which they may be exposed. We possess the Homeric Poems in almost the exact letters and words which Pisistratus, tyrant of Athens, endorsed with his approval; but the manuscript which that monarch stamped with his imprimatur, who can tell what became of it? Before the time of Pisistratus the Homeric Poems had had a very precarious existence. They, in fact, existed in fragments—some of them written, and some of them in oral form. By collecting the written forms, getting the orally preserved written down—by collating and transcribing them, and thus reducing to an harmonious whole what is now known as the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*—he conferred on the world of letters a boon for which we can never feel sufficiently grateful. The oldest manuscript copies of the *Iliad* or the *Odyssey* are considered to belong to the eighth or ninth century. The original complete manuscripts of the works of Homer survived only a generation or two after the time of Pisistratus.

It is an acknowledged fact that no manuscript

of any portion of even the collection of writings known as the New Testament can claim to be older than the sixth century ; and Biblical scholars allow that at least three hundred years before that the original copies of the Greek New Testament had ceased to exist. Indeed, it may almost be asserted that our knowledge of the works of ancient authors prior to the sixth and seventh centuries rests on the unsupported word of transcribers, whose ignorance of ancient history, and even frequently of contemporaneous history, has been demonstrated by the learned and indefatigable Tillemont, whose erudite remarks on ancient, monumental, and other inscriptions throw a flood of light on ancient history, and dispel much of the gloom which envelops the history of Christendom from the sixth to the fourteenth centuries — a gloom which the monkish writers of these times had neither the desire nor the ability either to enlighten or remove. The monkish scribes, when scarce of material on which to write, were in the habit of erasing the characters of antiquity, and many of the most valuable works of the ancient Greek and Roman authors were thus for ever lost, in order that the convent or the cloister might be enriched with missals, theological treatises, and miraculous Popish legends. From the eighth to the thirteenth century, during which period Europe was almost destitute of learning, of art, and of science, this detestable practice prevailed ; and the scholars of later times have often deplored the literary Vandalism of the pious ecclesiastics. The year 1438 A.D. saw, however, the beginning of a new era in the making of books. In that year Laurence John Koster of Haarlem, having originated the idea of block-printing, produced a small book entitled "*Speculum Humanæ Salvationis*," or "*A View of the Salvation of Man*." The leaves of this book were only printed on one side, and after it was bound the unprinted pages were pasted together, so that each leaf consisted of what had been before two

leaves. In the year 1442 a printing-office was established at Mentz by John Fust, one of the books he printed there being entitled "*Tractatus Petri Hispani*" ("Concerning Peter of Spain"). It is necessary, however, to state that both Koster and Fust used wooden blocks with words cut out in reverse, and all the books printed before the invention of metal types of one letter each are termed block-books. Sometime about the year 1450 John Gutenberg invented cut-metal types of one letter each, and before 1455 had issued from his press an edition of the Bible in Latin, commonly called the "*Mazarine Bible*." It was called the Mazarine Bible because a copy was found in the library of Cardinal Mazarine. A number of copies of this Bible were printed on vellum, one of which was sold at the sale of the Perkins Library on June 6, 1873, for the sum of £3400; another copy on paper was, at the same sale, sold for £2690. A partnership was formed about the year 1456 between Fust and Schœffer at Mentz, from whose press a large number of books were issued, such as the "*Book of Psalms*," the "*Durandi Rationali*," and "*Titus Livius Historia*." The great work which issued from their press was, however, an edition of the Bible in Latin with a date, the printing of which they finished in 1462. Fust & Schœffer sold their Bibles as manuscripts, and the price of other manuscript copies fell from 500 to 40 crowns, French money (see Gibbon, note). A copy of this Bible was sold at the Sunderland sale in December 1881, and was bought by Mr Quarritch of London for £1600. After the year 1462, the art of printing spread over a large portion of Europe. It was introduced into England in the year 1670 by William Caxton, a London merchant. It was introduced into Scotland in the year 1505. The first printer in Scotland was one Andrew Myllar, or, as the name is now pronounced, Miller. He first printed a book in the year 1505. He also issued a liturgical work in the following year (1506), but neither of these, nor any other of his print-

ing, are known to be in existence. In the year 1507 a patent or privilege was granted by King James IV. to his "*lovitis servitouris*, Walter Chepman and Andro Myllar, burgesses of our burgh of Edinburgh." There is in the Advocates' Library, Edinburgh, a small 4to. volume of tracts, with the colophon — "Heir ends the maying and disport of Chaucer, Imprtit in the South Gait of Edinburgh, be William Chepman and Androw Myllar, the fourth day of Apile, the yhere of God MCCCC and viii. yheris." Myllar is supposed to have learned the art of printing at Rouen in France, and after residing in Edinburgh for some years to have become acquainted with Chepman, who was a wealthy man and fond of literary pursuits, whom he persuaded to become a partner in business with him. The money which was required was supplied by Chepman, and the work was done by Myllar, who may therefore not inappropriately be denominated the Caxton of Scotland. The art was also introduced into Ireland in the year 1550, the first book printed in that country being a copy of the Liturgy, printed by Humphrey Powell.

The publishers of ancient Rome had a method of producing books which perhaps was as efficient as could have been devised, when books had to be produced by hand-writing. A reader was placed in a large room, and around him were the scribes, often as many as fifty in number. The reader read aloud in a slow, clear, and distinct tone the manuscript of the author, and the scribes wrote down the words as they fell from the mouth of the reader. This process of book-making by transcription, even when it was done by the most expert writers, was of necessity slow compared with the celerity of either block or type-printing.

No discovery or invention ever did so much for the progress of the human race as that of printing. Knowledge—which for thousands of years had only been attainable by a few—began to be diffused over a wider area, and an impetus

was given to the literature of Europe which, in ever-widening circles, permeates our every-day life. "The pen is mightier than the sword;" nations gain by studying the arts of peace, and such study is made pleasant and its effects made permanent through the mighty power of the press and its accompanying agencies. In the middle of the eighteenth century books were one hundred times cheaper than they had been a thousand years previously; while the relative values of almost all other articles of merchandise—taken as a whole—had neither advanced nor decreased on the average six per cent. From the era of the invention of printing may almost be dated the rise of the civilisations of modern times. The gloom of the dark ages was seldom irradiated during its continuance by the learning of any other than ecclesiastics, the bias or bent of whose minds was anything but favourable to the study of profane literature. The broad and generous stream of thought and criticism which, towards the end of the fifteenth century, arose in Italy under the cultured patronage of Lorenzo de Medici (1469 to 1492), helped to place letters on a basis which commanded the admiration of the learned in every country of Europe. From then till now literature has gone on freeing the world from the shackles of ignorance, and we who now live inherit a legacy of accumulated knowledge more precious than the "wealth of Ormus or of Ind." The benign and ennobling influence of literature is felt by all. The newspaper press of the present day, which is the latest-developed form of books, is the greatest agency and the mightiest power in the world. Public opinion, as embodied and expressed in the daily newspaper, may almost be considered to regulate individual life as well as shape and guide the energies of nations.

